

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Exploring Psychologists' Self Disclosure Practices and Privacy Management Strategies on
their Personal Facebook Profile.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

In

Psychology

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

Jessica Beaumont

2016

ABSTRACT

According to Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, the level of transparency that social networking sites has brought to the world will no longer support an individual having a personal and a professional identity; the two will become one and the same. This is a concern for those in the psychological profession, where self-disclosure of a personal nature is not only not recommended but is often considered to violate ethical principles of the profession, and could result in negative consequences for both the clients and the psychologists. This study explores how psychologists manage the balance between the self-disclosing nature of social networking sites with the need to protect their privacy online. Psychologists (n=99) from the New Zealand College of Clinical Psychologists and the New Zealand Psychological Society were asked to complete a survey indicating their self-disclosure practices and privacy management strategies on their personal Facebook profiles. Results suggest that psychologists are relatively consistent in the rules they have in place about who they share their information with and the strategies they use to protect it. Of the participants, 10% were found to have fully public disclosure practices, with the remainder having moderately or strict practices. While psychologists are engaging in self-disclosures on Facebook they appear to be doing so with some privacy protection strategies in place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Seth for staying strong through a very difficult year, and for having the patience and understanding to see me through the many hours of research and writing,

To my family and friends for their continued support and patience with my never ending journey of learning,

And to Dr Angela McNaught for the many hours of advice, support and editing that has made this research possible,

To all I express my deepest gratitude, Thank you!

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
The Privacy Paradox	2
Risk-Benefit Ration of Self Disclosure Online	2
Self-Disclosure and Privacy Management Strategies on Facebook	4
Psychologists and Social Networking Sites	6
Aims of the study	8
CHAPTER II: METHOD	9
Participants	9
Design	10
Participant Demographics.....	11
Facebook Utilisation.....	11
Information Disclosure Practices.....	11
Friend Networks.....	11
Use of Privacy Management Strategies.....	11
Privacy Concerns.....	12
Ethics	13
CHAPTER III: RESULTS	14
Facebook Utilisation.....	14
Exploring Self-Disclosure Practices	14
Friend Networks.....	18
Disclosure Practice and Number of Friends.....	19
Privacy Management Strategies.....	21

Familiarity with Privacy Settings.....	21
Reported Level of Privacy.....	21
Use of Privacy Strategies.....	21
Privacy Turbulence	22
Motivations for Use.....	22
Does the Privacy Paradox Exist.....	23
CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION	25
Facebook Utilisation	26
Exploring Self-Disclosure Practices	26
Friend Networks	29
Disclosure Practices and Number of Friends	31
Privacy Management Strategies	31
Privacy Turbulence	33
Motivations for Use	34
Does the Privacy Paradox Exist	34
Limitations of the Study	35
Future Research	36
Implications and Conclusions	37
REFERENCES	39
APPENDICES	43
Appendix A	43
Appendix B	54
Appendix C	56
Appendix D	58
Appendix E	59
Appendix F	61
Appendix G	62

List of Tables

Table		Page
1	The Distribution of Participants Working in Each Type of Organisation	10
2	The Length of Participant Registration with the New Zealand Psychologists' Board	10
3	Total Number of Participants who Disclosed Specific Content on their Profiles	15
4	Breakdown of Participants Willingness to Disclose Information According to the Audience of the Content	17
5	Distribution of Participants Disclosure Practice Scores According to the Number of Friends on their Profiles	20
6	Examples of Participants Experience of Privacy Turbulence	22
7	Participants' Reasons for the Utilisation of a Personal Facebook Profile	23
8	Participants' Level of Concern Surrounding Privacy Issues on Facebook	24